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Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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### PRIZES.

*Mrs. Wentworth divides her Prize for the best Essay on "Concentration of Purpose" between*

**Mr. GEORGE RADFORD and Mrs. THOMAS.**

*Mr. Theodore Mander has received no Competitions for a Prize he offered for the best List of Books for a School-master's Library.*

# THE PARENTS' REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE  
OF HOME-TRAINING AND CULTURE.

"Education is an atmosphere, a discipline, a life."

## MOTHERS AND SONS.

THE RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTY.

MANY a mother retains the confidence of her schoolboy son on serious subjects long after he has assumed an attitude of reserve towards all the rest of his elders and betters.

Happy mothers! Happier sons! In dealing with sons it is, as a rule, only mothers who combine love and judgment; and

"They that have love and judgment too  
See more than any other doo."

Of such mothers there are some who are from time to time startled by the remarks to which these confidences give rise, when conversation turns upon the leading points of domestic religious instruction. Ideas which are passed over by fathers with busy indifference, or are suppressed with indignant combativeness, may often be better dealt with by a mother's wise and sympathetic thoughtfulness. It is easy to mistake youth and to suppose that it is heedless and frivolous, and merely wishful to cast the old aside in order "to sin the oldest sins the newest kind of way." Youth, on the contrary, is apt to be in earnest—too much so for some older people. Unquestionably the foundation of faith for youth in these days is seriously

shaken. The question forces itself on the attention, whether, in the long process of the education of the human race, Christianity has been but an episode which is drawing to an end. Is it a fact that, while the arguments of theologians in support of ordinary domestic religious instruction grow stronger and stronger, effective belief in general society is continually growing weaker and weaker? Is it a fact, as was stated lately in several letters to the public press, that youths are ceasing to attend church as a rule, and that only those of them are present who make a study of liturgical ceremonies, who are devoted to lay preaching, or in some other way make a specialty of their religious convictions? The history of religious beliefs seems to show that what men accept or reject depends less upon argument than upon fashion. Men believe in the main what the men believe among whom they live. The learned who argue about those beliefs are really following when they appear to be leading. Men do not believe because scholars discuss, but scholars discuss what men happen to believe. Thus, if a number of good and learned old men announce to society that they have not changed their opinions since the days of their youth, shall we wonder that many young men, conscious that between such opinions and their own a great gulf lies open, caused by two generations of study and discovery, tacitly ignore the doctrines of their elders, and seek fresh light from other sources? If they speak out what is in their mind, shall we condemn them, and not rather approve? When so much is changing, is it not natural and right to ask what is permanent?

Christian teaching resembles a growing organism, and not a chain. There is a huge difference. A chain is made up of links, and every link that is broken breaks the chain. In a living organism, on the other hand, growth leaves behind it much matter that is decaying or dead, and a good deal which, after serving its purpose in construction, has thenceforth ceased to grow. Thus, while a broken link leaves a chain hanging useless, matter which has ceased to have any life may yet support the centre of vitality of an organism, and, in spite of its inanimate condition, may be essential to life, or, at any rate, indispensable to an understanding of the life which it supports.

Moving in such a sphere of thought, I approach the great question of the day: whether the Cross is to be in the future, as it has been in the past, the centre of moral teaching in Christen-

dom. That the symbol of the Cross everywhere predominated in the Middle Ages is obvious to every traveller. He sees men and women still buying and selling around the base of Gothic market crosses; he finds a cross on many an ancient bridge provided for him by the munificence of his ancestors; it is embossed or carved on the beams of many a mediæval dwelling-house in patterns and forms of beauty. The same token is still signed on the brow of the new-born babe, and marks the last resting-place of the dead. Even amid the carnage of modern warfare a cross indicates the army of mercy which attends to the wounded and dying.

Does this symbol of suffering continue to be the best accompaniment of all we think and say and do, from the cradle to the grave? When many thoughtful men say "No" to it, in what light can we answer this important question with a "Yes"?

The doctrine of the Cross has for nearly 1900 years formed the single distinct thread that has permeated the motley web of human affairs in Christendom. In all the variety of professions and occupations which absorb each man in his own duties and affairs the Cross alone has been a bond of union. In all sorts and conditions of men there is only one common element, and that is sacrifice. "Thou must forego" is earth's bitter, if bracing, commandment, and it is the only one that all of us, sooner or later, are obliged to fulfil. Men are separated in action; they are united in suffering. This fact is the basis of the doctrine of the Cross.

To this inner consciousness of the sadness of the lot of men, the Greeks gave voice in the most splendid series of Tragedies which exist in the world's literature, but their grandeur overwhelms and paralyses rather than stimulates the mind. Theirs is a revelation of sorrow which leaves us despondent and passive rather than buoyant in spirit and alert to promote the happiness of other people. The development of a man's fortune in that view is independent of his own will. Far different is the "word of the cross," which expresses for Christians exactly the same sense of sorrow. St. Paul in his "word of the cross" drew a distinction between man as one of diverse individuals and man as all that is human, the whole of humanity. He conceived of the idea of the union of many separate human elements namely Jew, Greek, disciples of one preacher, disciples of another, bondsmen, freemen, males, females, in one whole. Out of this

manifold, he created by an effort of thought a rational unity, including the whole human race viewed as a Christian community, or one Church.

Such is his conception of the Perfect Man, and it is unusual, lofty, and strangely akin to that of some influential thinkers in recent times who seem, however, to have arrived at the same conception by a different road. Ancient philosophy attained to a noble view of the communion of men which is conveyed in the motto, "*Orbis terrarum una urbs.*" That each man, whether Roman, Greek, or of any other nation, should feel himself a citizen of one state, the world, is a lofty generalisation, but St. Paul had a vision of the human race, in which every man should live according to the type, or example, of a Perfect Man, such perfection corresponding to the full, rich and fruitful significance of the name Christ in his own mind, "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." This is the conception of a perfect whole perfected in the perfection of all its parts.

The difficulties which are produced by life's variety are rendered easier if not removed by this "word of the cross." Who that thinks at all is not driven to apparent inconsistency when led to ask "What am I to do for others, and what for myself?" "What am I to keep for myself, and what am I to give away?" "When distinct duties clash by what rule shall I act?" The doctrine of the whole and its parts, simple as it is seems, is rarely comprehended just because it is only to be comprehended by a mental effort. Have not some good men endeavoured to avoid such difficulties by extremely simplifying life. They adopted one good principle, and followed it out in isolation. One saint pursued the principle of self-sacrifice alone, and dwelt on a column in the wilderness, while others would protract a solitary life as hermits, divested of all life's so-called superfluities in a mouldering cavern, forsaking the duty of living among men to save their own souls. They sought perfection by eliminating instead of perfecting the varied faculties with which they were endowed from their birth. If there is truth in the "word of the cross" life is not such a simple affair. No man can separate his own welfare from that of the general, or contribute much to the general good if he carries self-sacrifice to the extreme point of abnegation. He makes a cheap sacrifice of all he has who has nothing to sacrifice, and before a man give to others, he must first endow himself with something worth their acceptance. This

is true not merely of worldly substance, but of intellectual endowment.

We cannot neglect our own interests without detriment to our fellow creatures, nor can we selfishly put out of sight the wider interests of humanity without impairing our own.

Life, according to the "word of the cross" is no aimless self-abnegation to obtain self-glorification hereafter. Nearer akin to it is the spirit of these fine lines:

"Help me to need no aid from men,  
That I may help such men as need."

We may often in helping others sacrifice a present interest, but we fail not to gratify that larger self, that expanded self-will which includes mankind, or all men, summed up in the expression, "the perfect man, the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Religion, science, and philosophy alike point to unity in all creation, and it would seem that we, by our action, may assist to promote a social unity, which is the aim of Christianity. Failure in such a cause can be but partial, for in great undertakings many must fail before one succeeds, and many must hand on hopes to others which they cannot expect to see fulfilled in their own time. It is part of the gospel of the Cross to see things as they may be, and to be blind to things as they are. "The case was hopeless, yet he hoped." This spirit has been the prudent folly or the insane wisdom of the Christian saint.

Not to have tried is sorrow indeed, but trial with failure produces the generous elation of St. Paul, when he exclaims: "I rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the Church"; or, in the words of a modern poet:

"For the power appears to-morrow,  
That to-day seems wholly lost,  
And the reproductive sorrow  
Is a treasure worth the cost."

One possible view of the Atonement, then, is the setting at one of all creation in God through the Cross, or, in other words, communion in the cup of sacrifice. Certain learned men have evolved a much simpler account of it. Heaven is a Court of Justice. God is judge. Man is the defendant cast in a suit. The judge strikes a balance, setting in one scale all man's sins

and in the other all Christ's suffering. Thus Justice is even-handed, and man escapes punishment.

What is punishment, that we should seek to escape it? The most real punishment of sin, according to one of the greatest writers, is that state of mind in which the offender is content with his condition, and ceases to believe in good.

"No parody of Gospel teaching," says a living theologian, "can be more unlike the truth than that which represents it as the discharge of the sinner, being sinful still, from the penalty of guilt through the intervention of the guiltless." The fact is, that many philosophical theologians and reformers have spent much time in trying to devise a scheme by which salvation shall be placed upon a mechanical basis; but, like the quality of mercy, salvation is not strained, and cannot be defined in the legal phraseology of Jewish or Roman law. According to the word of the Cross, our inspiration is derived from a living and not from a dead Christ, for St. Paul writes: "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live: yet not I but Christ liveth in me, and the life which I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." This "living Christ" precludes passive contemplation of the death and Cross of Christ, and condemns, therefore, the paralysis of any human faculty. The process of redemption can be nothing automatic or mechanical. In every Christian life Christ lives as he lived in St. Paul.

"And no man asks his fellow any more  
Where is the promise of His coming? But  
Was he revealed in any of His lives  
As Power, as Love, as influencing Soul?"

We can afford, then, to concern ourselves but little with either the material torments of popular theology, or with its equally material awards. Christ in glory, golden crowned and clad in purple, distributing gifts to His followers, is not a vision for every one; but Christ with a crown of thorns, weary with toil for the sake of those who persecuted Him, and worn with suffering and sympathy, is an image open to the gaze of all who are aware of the presence of evil without and within, who enlist all powers of body and mind on the side of good, and who seek in doing good a closer communion with God. We know the cup which all who will may drink, and which the first apostles had to receive in exchange for the expectation of very different gratification.

What, then, shall we teach children on these matters? It is very easy to instil into their minds false ideas. Christ died that He may live in us. This physical death may be our spiritual life. Good then and true is the verse of the child's hymn which runs thus:

"Thou didst suffer, gentle Jesus,  
Bitter shame and agony;  
From sin's bondage to release us,  
Thou didst hang upon the tree."

But would Christ, who said, "Suffer little children to come unto Me," have allowed that they *caused* any of His pain and suffering? It is one thing to die on behalf of another, but it is a different thing to lay your death at the door of that other for whom you die. It is, therefore, a misleading way of conveying a spiritual truth to express it thus:

"But my sins it was that stung Thee,  
Not the scourge, the nail, the spear,  
'Twas my sins alone that hung Thee  
On the Cross, my Saviour dear."

Christ, we read, "nailed our sins to the Cross." This is not the same as saying that the sins were the nails. It is one thing to say that Christ's sorrow for sin gave Him more pain than His physical suffering. It is misleading to say that the sin is the cause of Christ's bodily pain. Christ our Passover is a figure of speech which must not be pressed too far. The Jewish sacrificial victims were not, like Christ, moral victims. The greatness of the Atonement, as preached by St. Paul in his Gospel, is that it was a moral and not a mechanical sacrifice.

They that are crucified with Christ will not rest content with any ingeniously elaborated scheme of redemption, nor will they confine their gaze to a cross moulded by human art into a form of earthly beauty steeped in rapture and adoration. For them the word of the Cross is a source of spiritual force, through which they may eradicate unconscious selfishness, and sympathise with the manifold fragmentary efforts of all who mean and do well to men. To be crucified with Christ is to grasp and hold in the mind the death which He died, as an inspiration to act from day to day throughout life.

Thus the Cross, as a symbol of the sacrifice which is productive of good to others, is something more than a sign. It is a

remembrance of a self-renunciation which has produced countless thousands of imitators, and has formed a bond of union between all who can now, or could in the past, give their lives or their labour for other's good, and who find in the expansion of their sympathies the same pleasure in working for others which is usually and vainly expected in pursuing self-regarding ends.

Thus, too, the Cross, originally the symbol of suffering, becomes a source of comfort and consolation, for the measure of our power to console others is the measure of our own sorrow. "As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so the power of our consolation aboundeth by Christ." In this view the word of the Cross is not dependent upon the opinion of current scholarship or physical science. Accepting such a view of the power of the gospel unto salvation, our aim in life will not be affected by the varying judgments of commentators. We shall not be troubled, for instance, if we find that some of the Psalms were written in the time of the Maccabees, and not by David, or that the stories of creation in Genesis are more like hymns than text-books of biology. Shall we expect to find the researches of modern science in the outpourings of the Hebrew prophets? Is the spirit which inspired them a spirit of holiness and goodness, of knowledge of rightness, a spirit to kindle the fire which alone can drive the moral engine within us; or is it a spirit to determine the age of a fossil or the date of a manuscript?

Our opinion on the nature of that spirit does matter, because if we look to it as a source of knowledge on dates and details of biology or physics we shall, as science advances, be labouring in that slough of despond which consists in reconciling discrepancies; but if we leave the details of science and history to scientific men and historians, and if we adhere to the spirit as a source of inspiration to lead a good life, then the greatness of the Scriptures will remain undisputed, however often scientific opinion may change in respect of pigs or creeping things, or however often things, once thought mysterious and inexplicable, become looked upon as common or familiar.

No change in scientific opinion about the date and value of books, about botany or about geology can ever alter what is independent of all such knowledge. All the noblest things that have happened in Christendom, whether we look at the lives of the saints of fame or at the piety of the humblest cottager living and dying in the spirit of Christ, are the real illustration of the

eternal, impregnable and unchanging truths of the Old and New Testaments. It is no proof of the truth of Scripture to show that if you take the words of this or that text in a new sense it will square with a new scientific classification, and they only give the lie to Holy Writ, who for pity, mercy, love, substitute some other principle as the basis of their dealings with their fellow-men.

Many will disapprove of the views which I have tried to explain because they appear to want definition and firm outline. No doubt under them much that has been sharply defined melts again into the indefinite. Many people need something tangible, and here all seems fluctuating. They seek something simple and fixed, that they may seize it at once, and here the object of their pursuit eludes their grasp. They yearn to depend upon the authority of those whom they can respect, and here the responsibility of choosing what they shall think or do is thrown upon their own shoulders. But these very difficulties are recommendations to thinking men. Religious life is no easy thing. It is a struggle to escape from the material to the spiritual, in spite of the fact that the latter cannot be comprehended or attained, except through the former. It therefore needs constant, renewed, active and earnest thought, which cannot be easy. In daily life the new must for ever be modifying the old, and the standard of goodness, like every other ideal, must be modified and improved in the unending labour of reaching forth after what is approachable but never attainable. The spirit remains the same, the matter in which it works keeps changing. It is useless, for instance, to entertain a fixed belief about Creation when our knowledge of created things is constantly growing and enlarging. In the Cross is our atonement, and through it all difference of opinion should be reconciled between men of good-will. For now as of old "Christ is our peace." This view of the atonement is not a new theory for the learned, but a pristine fact acted on for ages and ages by the simple. The voluntary death of Christ is not an act without parallel. The blood of many a good man has been shed for the sake of others, both before and since the Crucifixion. Nevertheless the Cross is the true sign of unselfishness in Christendom, because in it nearly all (I do not say all) voluntary self-sacrifice since the Christian era has been associated with this one sacrifice of Himself by Christ. Hence the Crucifixion is not any more one single act of self-sacrifice

done once for all a long time ago, but a continuous act magnified and intensified by untold numbers of self-sacrificing actions wrought by countless multitudes of people, who, living for the good of others, have done all in the name of the cross of Christ, which inspired them to act and think, to live and to die.

Is it not a great and stimulating reflection that in the far future this conception of the Cross will continue through the lives of good men further to fill and enlarge and intensify itself, and that as it grows older it will gather strength, and that though the torrent of pain and wrong will continue to stream forward in history, yet like a full tide from the ocean, the life of the Cross will appear in increasingly manifold forms, widening, freshening, and healing, as it swells onward with silent resistless flow.

Surely it is a high and generous thought, and worthy of the eager spirit of youth that his unit of existence may form part of so magnificent a whole.

I have put before you a layman's theology, and I know how little value that must have, because all unprofessional opinion is subject to one great defect—that it involves no responsibility. It may, however, be an aid to professional opinion. My object is to encourage those mothers, who are discouraged by the interminable controversies concerning points of Christian faith, and are abandoning religious teaching altogether, to catch beneath the noise of the waves of superficial trouble the still clear tones of our heritage in the Church.

In the main our health depends upon the air which we daily breathe. If that be of the freshest and brightest our health is likely to correspond. Can enthusiasm for the highest type of character be more readily and lastingly awakened by any other literature than that of the Bible? If not, then let this be the atmosphere which children of the present breathe daily as has been the custom in the past. The lives of most of us may not do justice to the inspiration which we may have felt from our early study of the Bible; but nearly all people will admit that what is best in their characters can be readily traced to that source, and therefore I repeat with earnestness, do not let us throw away wheat and chaff in a fit of despondency caused by Biblical criticism and the apparent hostility to truth of many pious preachers, but let us continue to cling to the Gospels, and read them daily with the children as far the most important part of their education.

T. G. R.

## "OUR CHILDREN'S" BOOK FRIENDS.

BY THEIR SISTER.

Boy and the Sprite, as we call them, are not altogether like other children. No doubt affectionate prejudice counts for something in our estimate of them, and the approximation to knowledge of that inscrutable problem, a child's mind, attainable within the family alone, counts for more. The sameness in children is on the outside, for those who love them not; the *otherness* is within, for those who do. But even to the casual observer there is something of unwonted freshness and originality about our little ones, and though they are not abnormal, they repay observation. However, I am bidden to talk about their books, not about them, so I will only say that the Sprite is the elder, and eleven years of age, and that she is the youngest of five sisters; and that Boy is seven and a half, the only boy and youngest child of the family. The actual difference between them of nearly four years is reduced to a minimum by an entire sympathy of character and interest. Boy, by the way, who is something of a philosopher, has discovered this unity of feeling, and described it to his mother as "feeling *to*" his sister, illustrating his meaning by drawing circles with his hand in the air. He rejected the word "sympathy" suggested to define his psychological experiences, because he thought that only referred to "feeling sorry, and you know, mother, it's just the same when she is happy; I feel *to* her." The two have shared all their pursuits both at work and play; and this has been the easier as the Sprite's health has made it desirable to keep her back intellectually, and Boy's intelligence has sent him half way to meet her, when she descends to his level. They both inhabit half their time the world of the imagination, where they meet on common ground, and from which they bring us "airs and floating echoes," which convey anything but melancholy into our day of prosaic cares and interests.